

# RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORM: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

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**RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORM: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Almost two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's leadership has been trying to modernize the military but all attempts to create highly mobile, technologically sophisticated, and fully professional forces were delayed because of lack of funding, opposition from high ranking officers, corruption, and Russian society's reluctance to make any changes. Recent conflict with Georgia exposed Russia's military weakness, which showed Russian leadership that radical changes were needed. Although Russian leadership can initiate many reforms in order to change military, as long as they do not want to devote sufficient resources for military reforms and as long as Russia's military is reluctant to change their culture, all attempts will finish as fast as they will start.



## RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORMS: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The Russian armed forces have experienced constant changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, Russian military still are struggling to find identity. Many high ranking officers still have the cold war mentality and they are reluctant to adopt military reforms. In order to understand why the Russian military is not willing to change, one should understand military's role in the Soviet history. In the Soviet Union, military was the main pillar of the Soviet Regime. They were a privileged part of society and moreover they enjoyed a kind of operational autonomy. In addition, during the Soviet period there was lack of civilian control over the military. Almost two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's leadership has been trying to modernize the military but all attempts to create highly mobile, technologically sophisticated, and fully professional forces were delayed because of lack of funding, opposition from high ranking officers, corruption, and Russian society's reluctance to make any changes. Recent conflict with Georgia exposed Russia's military weakness, which showed Russian leadership that radical changes were needed. Although Russian leadership can initiate many reforms in order to change military, as long as they do not want to devote sufficient resources for military reforms and as long as Russia's military is reluctant to change their culture, all attempts will finish as fast as they will start.

The first talks about military reforms started in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. However, realizing that with such a massive nuclear capability on both sides, a large scale war with the west was unfeasible. Thus the last Soviet leader, Mikhile Gorbachov, was not interested in the military reforms. Consequently; in order to save money for social programs, he started the reduction of the armed forces, and the cutting the funds

for the military as well. It was merely the reduction of the armed forces without any clear political goal or developed concept.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, needed the military only for maintaining his power. He did not do anything to harm the old corrupted military system. With this attitude and appealing economic conditions, the consequences were devastating. It took only half of a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union for the Russian military to become a community of demoralized armed men not confident in the future and without any legal and social protection. These conditions led to the spread of crime and corruption, abuse, torture and brutal beatings in barracks. All those conditions led to a humiliating defeat in first Chechnya war and cost tens of thousands of lives of soldiers and Russian citizens.

After becoming the president in 2000, Vladimir Putin's main goal became to reclaim Russia's glory and its place among world's super powers. He knew that without a strong military it was an impossible task. He needed a powerful military to challenge internal and external threats. On the other hand he realized the seriousness of the problems in the military and had decided to avoid radical and fast changes. Since then, Russian leadership has been striving to modernize armed forces.

In order to make any changes, president Putin had to overcome the resistance of high ranking officials. Because of their importance in the Soviet Union and in Russia afterwards, the military did not have the will to support the military reforms. They were satisfied maintaining the status quo. The reason was clear: they enjoyed their administrative and operational autonomy and did not want to lose control over it.<sup>1</sup> To manage this situation and limit the military's freedom, Putin appointed one of his most

trusted allies, former KGB general Sergey Ivanov, as minister of defense.<sup>2</sup> Moreover he went further and in order to reduce probability of corruption and increase control over the military budget, he appointed Lybov Kudelina as the deputy Minister of Defense, moving her from the Ministry of Finance. It was the signal for everybody that some changes are about to take place.

In 2003, President Putin and Minister of Defense Sergey Ivanov laid out a plan for transformation of the Russian military. The plan was adopted in April 2003.<sup>3</sup> The problem with this plan was that Putin and Ivanov saw military reform in isolation, and did not have the perception that the military cannot be isolated from other government structures.<sup>4</sup> That plan did not encompass changes in the state structure from the presidential authority to the implementation of the armed forces. Also it did not answer strategic and operational issues. Simply put, it was only a partial modernization and reforms of the armed services.<sup>5</sup>

The main points of the modernization were: to downgrade the role of the General Staff and exercise civilian control over it, reorganize the military industrial complex, reduce manpower in the armed forces, create partly professional armed forces between 2004-2008, create an NCO corps, and overall, transform the Russian military forces into highly mobile and modern forces that could deal with new security challenges,<sup>6</sup> such as: regional and local conflicts, combating terrorism, peacekeeping operations, and joint operations with coalition partners.

Despite a shortage in funding and resistance from high ranking military officers, Putin's administration achieved some goals within two years period. On March 9, 2004, President Vladimir Putin signed the document "On the System and Structure of Federal

Executive Bodies". The document encompassed the administrative reform and defined the structures, function and the authorities of federal executive bodies (ministries, federal services and federal agencies). According to this document, all military formations were consolidated under the Defense Minister. Those formations included the Railroad Troops, the Special Construction Troops, Military- Technical Cooperation Service, Defense Order Service, Technical and Export Control Service, as well as portion of the Federal Agency for Atomic Energy.

Moreover, on 11 June 2004, the Russian Duma passed a law that gave the Defense Minister operational control of the army<sup>7</sup> ending the General Staff's autonomy and operational control over the army. As a result Putin and Ivanov successfully subordinated the general Staff to the Minister of Defense. Putin's administration was successful in the unification of command and control of all branches in every military district under one single territorial combatant commander.<sup>8</sup> This modification should enhance command and control of joint operations.

Additionally, after administration reform in 2004, President Putin successfully subordinated all power structures. The president's administration became in charge of controlling all military and power formations in the country, including the Federal Security Service (FSB), subordinated to the president in December 2005. The special independent investigation unit, created in September 2005 which monitors and investigates corruption and violation in all power ministries, was also subordinated to the president.<sup>9</sup>

Those changes consolidated unprecedented power over the Russian Federation under the minister of Defense and the President. However, this did not end the military's

resistance to the reforms. Many high ranking military officers in Moscow thought that military reform would jeopardize Russia's security system and Russia's ability to react to external and internal threats. Even though President Putin ordered a change in priorities from a large scale war with NATO to regional conflicts and counterterrorism on Russian territory that was followed by so called Ivanovo's Doctrine which was presented by him in October 2003, in which NATO presented no existing threat to the security of the Russian Federation <sup>10</sup> still the Cold War outlook remained in the minds of high-ranking military officials. They saw NATO and China as the biggest threats, and believed strongly the possibility that Russia would fight a large-scale war again. Because of this view they favored of the old Soviet conscript system with a massive mobilization back up. Basically, this was in favor of quantity versus quality. However, they forgot to take in consideration that the Russian Federation was not the Soviet Union any more with extensive human resources. Moreover their perceived adversaries, NATO and China, had advantages both in human resources and technology.

Development and transformation of the military industrial complex also was vital for Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, three-quarters of the USSR defense enterprises were ceded to Russia. More than 70 cities, factories and closed administration entities were totally dependent on the defense industry. By 2003, the output of the military industrial complex had been steadily decreasing. Compared with 1991, it produced six times less, the power load was reduced by 10-15%, and 40% of the equipment was obsolete. Defense companies had to release more than 2 million workers; even those who remained had salaries that were 40% lower than in the industry as a whole. Moreover the state order was small, and state could finance only

40-45% of its order. As a result, military industrial complex was not receiving money for equipment that it had produced.<sup>11</sup> Because all weapons systems that were at the Russian armed forces disposal had been produced by domestic companies, saving the military complex became the government's priority.

By 2003, 20-25% companies in the military industrial complex were at the edge of bankruptcy.<sup>12</sup> The Russian government was aware of the situation and knew that it needed to act. The problem was that Russia did not allow the private sector to invest money in the military industry and without investment, saving those firms became harder. The government took the initiative and made some modifications. With the creation of ROE (Rosoboronexport), which gave the responsibility to control all arms sales, Putin's administration regained a monopoly and exclusive control over all arms sales. Putin redesigned the military industry. He created the Federal Agency for industry and gave it oversight of the entire defense sector. The Kremlin began consolidating almost 1700 existing companies into 35-40 giant corporations.<sup>13</sup> But the problems still remained; low quality of management; worn out assets; high energy costs; and aging workers.<sup>14</sup> Many experts argued that the modification had changed only the bureaucratic structure and failed to actually modernize the military industry.

### Professionalization

Impressed by US successes in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Putin determined Russia needed a professional army. He saw a professional army's advantages and had decided to apply it to the Russian military. Besides, he knew from the experience of the first Chechnya war, that many units were partially full of professional soldiers, but because of lack of funding, training, and discipline, their performance was poor. In fact

many soldiers deserted from their units.<sup>15</sup> He understood that only the name “professional”, did not mean anything. There was a necessity to push the military toward professionalization. Although he knew that with modest funds, the whole transformation from a conscript system to a professional system in a short amount of time was an impossible task for Russia. To achieve his goal, president Putin made initial decision to remove all conscripts from conflict zones, (including Chechnya and peacekeeping missions), and to recruit professional soldiers. He also intended to improve training and quality of life for them. As a result at the end of 2004, Minister of Defense Ivanov declared that the Ministry of Defense fulfilled its obligation and starting in January 2005, no conscripts would serve in the north caucuses region and outside of the Russian Federation. He also announced that 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, which was stationed in Chechnya, was fully staffed by professionals.<sup>16</sup> Theoretically, this was true, but in practice it was something different. Indeed, the majority of those soldiers had signed a contract and was receiving the salary of a professional soldier, but the fact of the matter was that a big portion of those contract soldiers, whom Ivanov had mentioned, were simply conscripts who signed a contract during their obligatory service and it had nothing to do with a professional army. Furthermore, the NCO corps still was not developed and dedavshina maintaining discipline by beating new recruits, and crime were widespread among soldiers. With those changes the first phase of the military reforms took place during 2003-2004.

## Phase Two

Phase two occurred in 2005-2006. This time clear goals were established. The main focus of the defense reforms was: a new command and control structure, a

mobilization system, modernization and rearmament, security sector reforms, (with a focus on counterterrorism measures), and a new form of civilian control over the military.

In order to improve the command and control system, defense reforms included reforming the military district system structure into a regional command structure. Out of six military districts and four fleets, three regional commands were formed: West European, Central Asian, and Far Eastern. The regional command became in charge of territorial defense and all military formations (except strategic missile forces).<sup>17</sup> A new document was introduced and endorsed that defined authorities of the regional commander. “On operational readiness of the territory of the Russian Federation for the Purposes of Defense Until 2025” was the document prepared by the General Staff and supported by all ministries and departments including the presidential administration.<sup>18</sup>

It was the first time that the new command and control system was directly related to the state structure and harmonized security strategy policy among different ministries and agencies.

Furthermore, new military formations were created. Those new formations were tested in the Kaliningrad region and on Kamchatka Peninsula. Additionally, the operational task forces at the brigade to corps level were tested in the Leningrad Military District. At the beginning of 2006, the Chief of General Staff, General Balyevsky, revealed that after analyzing the results of the experiments, a final decision would be made in 2008-2010.<sup>19</sup>

Unification of the logistics systems in the military district was an important segment of the military reforms. The decision was made to unify transportation,

warehousing, healthcare, and infrastructure support, of all military formations including the Ministry of Internal Affairs into one single command within the boundaries of the military district. A unification of the procurement process for all military formations was part of the optimization process. The goal of the optimization process was to reduce cost and manpower.<sup>20</sup> In order to reform the defense sector and control the procurement process for all military and security forces, the government created the Military Industrial Commission (MIC) which was placed under the Ministry of Economic Development and trade. MIC was responsible for the control of long-term procurement planning and management of procurement projects. MIC's responsibilities also were to: monitor pricing of defense projects, define the main parameters for state defense orders, encourage competition between enterprises in production of spare parts, prevent and control the creation of monopolist producers among military enterprises.<sup>21</sup>

In order to harmonize the joint logistics and procurement process, the government created a civil agency with authority which was scheduled to start functioning in 2007. In order to control this entire process, president Putin appointed Ivanov as a First Deputy Prime Minister with special authorities. His responsibilities were the implementation of military-technical policy, defense orders, reconstruction of the military industrial complex, including space, nuclear, and missile production enterprises.

Professionalization and mobilization of the armed forces remained a huge problem for Russian military reforms in the period of 2005-2006. There was a clear sign from the civilian leadership that the conscript system would not be abolished in the near future. Only permanent readiness units were to be fully professionalized by 2007.

According to a plan, about 130, 000 contract soldiers should have signed in contracts.

However, despite early promises by the Minister of Defense, professionalization was behind schedule. The professionalization process faced many problems.

The first problem was low salary, (in comparison with civilian sector \$500-570 per month). A contract soldier's salary was 5000-6000 RUB (\$200-250) In addition, low living standards for contract soldiers and their family members, made it difficult to attract and retain recruits in a professional army. The second problem was the absence of noncommissioned officers, who are primarily responsible for training and education. Lack of NCOs led to the dedavshina, abuses, alcoholism, drug use, and crime. Third, problem was double booking, when MOD re-registers contract soldiers from one unit to another and kept them in conflict zones after their deployment time was finished.<sup>22</sup> Those problems negatively impacted the armed forces and few civilians wanted to join the army, and fewer soldiers wanted to continue serving after deployment. Thus MOD had problems with recruitment of new soldiers, and also maintaining the strength of units transferring into contract service. There were many cases of contract soldiers failing to return to their units after vacations or simply deserting.

Therefore, the government took new steps to defend and promote contract services and increase recruitment of contract soldier's quality as well as quantity: The government passed strict laws for those who failed to fulfill the terms of their contracts; the MOD created military centers in civil universities and colleges for the promotion of a professional service; NCOs were introduced into the army as intermediate leaders between soldiers and officers; the MOD initiated a home mortgage system for individuals who agreed to serve as an officer for 20 years; special military training and

education courses in secondary schools began to upgrade physical fitness, education, and the professional level of potential draftees.

Despite those changes professionalization of the army was behind the government's timetable. Because of lack of funding and manpower to professionalize, the army's conscript system remained. However, the conscript system had many problems as well.

The demographic dynamic does not favor Russia. The pool of eligible draftees has continually shrunk since the mid-1990s, and the quality of draftees has declined considerably. An increasing percentage of conscripts was found to be physically or mentally unfit for service and was discharged thereafter. In 1994, only 25 percent of eligible age men were physically and mentally fit for military service; in 2005-06 that number dropped to nine percent. Furthermore, it is likely that in the future those numbers will decrease because the country is also expected to struggle in the next few years with a reduction of labor force due to a negative birth rate.<sup>23</sup> Considering all of these problems, MOD was forced to make radical changes in the legislation for the conscript army, and introduced legislative changes: the MOD proposed the suspension of nine types of deferment, a legal loophole that allows draftees to evade a draft call; MOD advocated the reduction of service time from two years down to 1.5 years by 2007, to be further reduced to 1 year by 2008; MOD recommended a tree year term rotation for officers who work in the commissariat an organization responsible for call up of drafts in order to eliminate corruption and increase the number of eligible drafts. Despite those drastic changes, the Russian armed forces did not improve the quality or quantity of people who wanted to serve his/ her country as a soldier, NCO or officer.

Modernization and rearmament was one of the top priorities for the Russian leadership during phase two in the years of 2005-2006. The government's main focus was on procurement programs for the nuclear strategic forces, permanent readiness forces, and counterterrorism units.<sup>24</sup>

While conventional forces were under reform, to fill security gaps, Russia heavily depended on its nuclear capabilities. Beginning 2005, Russia invested a lot of money in modernizing its strategic nuclear forces. It was the only force structure that received 100 percent funding. According to the Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov, modernization of the nuclear strategic forces would take place until 2015-2020. After modernization, Russia was going to have around 2000 warheads. According to SORT U.S-Russian Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT) each side is allowed to have 1700-2200 warheads, until then Russia's goal is to maintain its minimum deterrence capabilities. According to Ivanov, Russia would retain a nuclear triad that consists of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM); sea based submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers (SLBM). However, the Russian leadership realized Russia's financial and economical limitations and tried to abandon the arms race and pursue an asymmetric approach. They want to simply respond to threats with all available means.<sup>25</sup>

Rearmament of the permanent readiness forces with high tech weapons systems was one of the priorities. It was a plausible decision if one takes into account that the large-scale delivery to the Armed forces were in 1991-1992<sup>26</sup>. Of course modernization is important, but the question is does Russia have the capability to rearm and modernize its army? 100 percent of Russia's weapon systems are produced domestically. With the effect of the crises in the late 1990s and early 200s, the

government's order for procurement was very small, and virtually all of this money went to repair equipment and weapons. Consequently, Russia's military enterprise lost momentum. It is not the same as it was during the communist era. Since 1990, the Russian military industry suffered a lot from a lack of funds and corruption. Additionally, Russia's brightest minds left Russia to seek a better life and prosperity. Since then almost nothing new has been created by the military industry.

In order to rearm the armed forces, the Kremlin had to manage problems and stabilize the financial situation in the military industrial complex. The government followed an established plan and continued the consolidation of small manufacturing companies into big government controlled enterprises. This reform mainly touched the aviation, radio-electronic and shipbuilding industries.<sup>27</sup> The main goal of those changes was to create competitive and financially proficient corporations. The intent was to unify the existing 570 state-owned and 428 shareholding firms into giant firms under government control, and if needed, to declare bankruptcy.

After reforming the government structures in 2004, a new format for presenting the defense budget was introduced by the government. A core of the innovations was the abandonment of the old itemization principle and the publication of classified information. Also, it was first time that the Russian government unified all military budgets under one chapter of the national defense budget. But those were not the only changes that Russia made concerning budgetary items during the second phase of the military reform.<sup>28</sup>

By 2007, the Russian defense budget underwent an unprecedented increase. In 2005, Russian defense spending rose 22%, in 2006 27%. In 2007 the Russian

government approved a re-armament program through the years 2015 with a \$ 240 billion budget.<sup>29</sup> In an interview on national TV, President Putin proudly emphasized that Russia spends 2.6% of its GDP, almost \$30 billion, on defense. But he also admitted that it is a lot less than the United States and half as much as China.<sup>30</sup> Russia genuinely increased its defense budget, but if one considers the size of the military, the budget has fundamental conflicts. For instance Russian military spending nearly equaled that of Great Britain and France. But in comparison with Russia's 1.2 million men that of Great Britain and France is relatively small at 250, 000 men. Russian operating such a large army and huge stocks of equipment soaks up a major part of funding, allowing only minimum funding for modernization, research and development.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, taking in account the annual inflation rate in the Russian Federation, average 10%, despite a significant increase in the defense budget, it was not enough to support the armed forces' reform. Spending more does not mean spending enough.

Regarding civilian control over the military, the situation remained the same. No major changes have been made in phase two. Even though President Putin and Defense Minister Ivanov degraded the role of the General Staff and exercised operational control over the army, it could be called presidential control not civilian. Simply put, the legislative branch of the government (the state Duma) played a weak role in the military reforms. Furthermore, it has weak control over military spending and procurement programs.

The only civilian organization that has any authority over the military is the Public Council. In 2006, the Ministry of Defense created the council. Its responsibility is to

control legal documents and bills that are initiated by the Ministry of Defense. The council also protects the rights of military members and MOD's civilian personnel.<sup>32</sup> This was the end of the second phase of the military reforms in the Russian Federation. The second phase ended with changes but no significant success.

Phase three began when in 2008, the five-day war with Georgia revealed many weaknesses, specifically: in the command and control system, equipment, and training. That war demonstrated the necessity to speed up the military reforms and showed the Kremlin that tomorrow's conflicts will be fought with small, well-equipped and well-trained professional forces.

The decision was made to make significant changes and modernize the Russian armed forces. And on September 11<sup>th</sup> the Russian newly elected president Dimity Medvedev announced upcoming military reforms. Some experts emphasized that Russia was going to give up the idea of a mass mobilization army. Thus this decision was fundamentally important.<sup>33</sup>

Shortly after Medvedev's announcement, Army General Nikolai Makarov, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, revealed a plan for upcoming military reforms. According to Makarov's statement, the main focus of the reform would be downsizing the armed forces from 1.2 million to 1 million. In addition to downsizing, the central aspects of the reforms include rearmament, professionalization of units, creation of an NCO corps, and the reorganization of the military command and control system from a four-tier (military district-army-division-regiment) to a three-tier military district-operational command-brigade) system.<sup>34</sup>

Downsizing the armed forces included the abolishing of 200 General Officer positions and cutting 200,000 officer positions (there are 1100 General Officers and 350,000 officer positions in the Russian Armed Forces). The reduction will take place from 2009-2012. Mostly, those are high-ranking officers' positions, majors and above, located in central headquarters and high-level staff. On the other hand there will be an increase of lieutenant's positions from 50,000 to 60,000. The main point is to decentralize the decision making process and delegate authority.<sup>35</sup>

Another innovation is abolishment of the “praporshik” institution. Praporshiks are more like warrant officers, technical specialist but with no professional training that a regular officer gets. Instead MOD was going to develop NCO corps and recruit and train 250,000 NCOs.

Reorganization of the command and control system included bringing to an end the army, division and regiment structures, and creating of BCTs (brigade combat teams). Russia's plan is for BCT, to be largely self-contained, highly maneuverable, combat-ready forces that can be deploy quickly in a crisis.

Regarding the restructuring of units, some progress was made in 2008-2009. According to the ground forces commander equivalent of the Chief of Staff of the Army in the western armies, General Vladimir Boldyrev, by March 2009, ground forces had already formed 20 motorized infantry brigades. The plan is to create 46 brigade combat teams in the ground forces.<sup>36</sup>

Abolishment of old command and control structures also means aggregation and unification of small military units into big military installations. After the unification process is complete, the number of military units in the armed forces will be reduced

from 2495 to 494. The biggest cut will be in ground forces. The ground forces will be cut by 90%, from 1,890 to 172 units, within a three-year period.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most important tasks for phase three military reforms is to re-equip the Armed Forces with the newest weapons systems. According to President Medvedev, a rearmament program should be finished in 2020. He also emphasized that falling prices for oil and gas, the main source of revenue for the Russian Federation budget, would not force him to scale back on plans to modernize the military. The defense budget has "virtually remained the same as was planned despite our current financial problems."<sup>38</sup> But many experts are extremely skeptical about rearmament. As an independent military expert, Pavel Felgenhauer, notes, Russia may not only lack the money, but also the industrial capacity for large-scale rearmament. Felgenhauer says "Russia will most likely need to buy technologies and components from the West, as well as entire weapons systems."<sup>39</sup>

There are some indications that the Russian government has will to cooperate with the West in terms of its military industry. Recently, Russian officials announced negotiations with France to buy a helicopter carrier. It is the first time in Russian history that the Russians are considering buying a warship from a foreign country. This French helicopter is a carrier class "MISTRAL" which will cost roughly 500 million EU (\$730 million). In addition, the Russians have negotiated with the French to buy a license for carriers that will be built in Russia and would cost a total of 1.2 to 1.4 billion EU.<sup>40</sup> This deal is still under discussion in Russia.

This is not the only case where the Russians are negotiating with a foreign country to buy new systems. On June 22, 2009, the deputy head of the Russian

government Federal Service for Military Technical Corporation, Vyacheslav Dzilkan announced the purchases of 12 UAVs from Israel worth over \$53 million. He also emphasized that the main purpose of this purchase is to study and acquire the new technology in order to build new UAVs in Russia.<sup>41</sup> This statement confirms that Russia has genuine problems with developing new technologies. Despite the Kremlin's effort to professionalize the Russian army and improve the quality of life for contract soldiers many problems still remain unsolved. Low salary and dedavshina still cause many soldiers to desert from their units. In Georgia, a South Caucasus republic which is partially occupied by Russia, three Russian soldiers left their units at different times and from different locations and asked the Georgian government for a political asylum.<sup>42</sup> Those separate incidents demonstrate how intolerable conditions are in the armed forces. There are few examples in history when the soldiers of an occupying force asked the government of the occupied country for political asylum. Low pay has afflicted the Russian military since the fall of the Soviet Union. A military service contract is not popular with Russian citizens, mainly because of the low payment.<sup>43</sup> This has direct implications on the numbers of applications. As deputy chief of the General Staff General Vasily Smirnov said: "Unfortunately, the number of application to serve on the contract does not increase. Apparently this is due to the fact that the level of salaries is still small."<sup>44</sup>

Early retirement of 12,000 officers in 2005 showed that something has to be done to save the Russian army from destruction.<sup>45</sup> Former President Vladimir Putin recognized the necessity of raising the salary for officers and revealed a plan the every year an officers salary would be increased by 15%.<sup>46</sup> This statement sounded good, but

if one takes into account the annual inflation in Russia- and average of 10% from 2002 to 2008 – this step will likely not prove sufficient.<sup>47</sup>

In 2009, the Russian government again increased salaries, but they still remain low in comparison with the civilian sector. A soldier on contract receives an average of 11 to 16 thousand rubles, \$ 300-530 per month, and the sailors and sergeants serving under contract receive from 16 to 18 thousand rubles (\$530-\$600).<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, many other problems with the standards of living and absence of the noncommissioned officers still continue to be unsolved. Despite some successes, Russian military reform still faces many challenges that will delay further reform. Opposition from inside the military, corruption, and lack of funding, are challenges that the Russian government must tackle to fully implement reform.

Corruption is widely spread among high-ranking military officers and civilian officials. In the span of a single year 2008, 196 senior officers were prosecuted (ten percent were generals and the rest were colonels who were dealing with the purchase of equipment, housing, and fuel).<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately for the Russian government, this number has increased year after year. According to Maj. Gen. Alexander Sorochkin, deputy chair of the Prosecutor's Office Investigations Committee, the corruption rate increased by 30% in the Russian armed forces, as the number of corruption-related crimes in the Russian Armed Forces hit 1,400 during a nine-month period in 2008, which cost the state budget 2.2 billion rubles \$78.6 million.<sup>50</sup> But we can assume that the situation with corruption is much worse.

Although year after year military spending is increasing, simply increasing the budget does not mean the government is spending enough. For example, despite

funding increases the government cannot fulfill its housing obligations to its soldiers. The military's construction efforts have been inundated with corruption and inefficiency, according to the Russian newspaper *IZVESTIA*. By January 2008, 122,400 military families were on the waiting list for housing,<sup>51</sup> waiting for an apartment that they may never get. The reduction of the armed forces by 200,000 officers will make it even harder to fulfill the government's military housing obligations. The Russian government came up with a new idea to address this issue by selling government-owned military property such as guest-houses, unused ranges and garrison towns. By selling these things, the government hopes to raise money and build apartments for officers, but these people still will be on the waiting list a decade from now.<sup>52</sup> Despite the government's promise many officers are skeptical. One officer who spoke in anonymity said, "I did not know the army had anything left to sell. I thought it had all been stolen a long time ago."<sup>53</sup> It is sad to say, but soldiers and officers have lost faith in their leadership, and this further lowers morale in the armed forces.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited most of the Soviet's military power. However, the Russian military has become a shadow of the Soviet war machine despite constant military reforms. Sensible changes occurred during Vladimir Putin's presidency 2000-2008. Putin realized the importance of the military and tried to convert Russia's massive army, based on a conscript system, into a professional, well-equipped and trained mobile force, which could fight 21<sup>st</sup> century wars. During military modernization, Putin's administration successfully subordinated the armed forces under civilian control and limited the role of the General Staff. The Kremlin also managed to unify all military formations within the boundary of a military district under a single

command. Moreover a new procurement policy and budget planning system was introduced within military modernization. Also, logistic and procurement policies of all military formations was successfully unified. Some units were fully filled with professional soldiers. However, the conscript system still remains in the Russian military. Furthermore, the Kremlin successfully increased the military budget year after year, but it is still far behind the numbers that western countries spend on their militaries. The five-day war with Georgia exposed Russian military weaknesses in its command and control system, training, and equipment. This war showed that previous attempts to modernize the Russian military did not produce the desired results. Thus, the newly elected President Medvedev ordered a speed up of military reforms which will encompass: downsizing the armed forces from 1.2 million to 1 million, further changes of the command and control system, and a structural change from four to three levels - abolition of armies, divisions, and regiments and the introduction of BCTs (brigade combat teams), a move to professionalize the armed forces, and an introduction of NCOs. Additionally, the armed forces will be rearmed with high precision weapons. The military reform will be challenged with many problems. Among the problems are the continued resistance from high ranking military officials, corruption, demography and a lack of funding. Despite the Kremlin's efforts to achieve its goal in a short amount of time, the Russian armed forces still have a long journey until it will become a successful organization. Without dramatic changes in military culture, the Russian military will remain a 20<sup>th</sup> century armed forces.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Isabelle Facon. The modernization of the Russian military: the ambitions and ambiguities of Vladimir Putin pp 2-4

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<sup>3</sup> Dale R.Herspring, Vladimir Putin and Military Reforms in Russia' European Security 14, 1, (2005), P-145

<sup>4</sup> bid p-142

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Blank. Potemkin's Treadmill: Russian Military Modernization p-175

<sup>6</sup> Dale R.Herrpring, Vladimir Putin and Military Reforms in Russia' European Security 14, 1, (2005), PP-146-148

<sup>7</sup> [www.GlobalSecurity.org](http://www.GlobalSecurity.org). Ministry of defense

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Blank. Potemkin's Treadmill: Russian Military Modernization pp-175-176

<sup>9</sup> Irina Isakova. Russian Defense Reforms: Current Trends pp. 56-57

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Blank. A new Russian Defense Doctrine. Pp 154-155

<sup>11</sup> NASLEDIA.ru Russian Military Complex Conditions and Funding.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Blank. A new Russian Defense Doctrine p-185

<sup>13</sup>Ibid pp 185-186

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/index.html> Military Industry Under Putin

<sup>15</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer. Russian Military Reforms: Ten Years of Failure. pp 8-9

<sup>16</sup> Izvestia 12/11/2004/

<sup>17</sup> GlobalSecurity.org Military Reforms of the Russian Federation.

<sup>18</sup> Irina Isakova. Russian Defense Reforms: Current Trends pp 5-7

<sup>19</sup> Ibid pp 9-10

<sup>20</sup> Ibid pp 11-15

<sup>21</sup> Ibid pp 39-43

<sup>22</sup> Ibid pp 14-16

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p-21

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p-30

<sup>25</sup> Ibid pp 30-34

<sup>26</sup> Krasnaia Zvezda September 23, 2009

<sup>27</sup> Alexander, Nicolli, "Russia's Defense Industry Phoenix from the Ashes?" IISS Strategic comments, vol.13 International Institute for Strategic Studies. London October 2007 p-2

<sup>28</sup> Irina Isakova. Russian Defense Reforms: Current Trends pp 41-44

<sup>29</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. Russian Military Budget.

<sup>30</sup> Falgenhauer. Putin's military Numbers Just Don't Add Up. Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 3 Issue: 202

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Arbatov, "Russian Military Policy Adrift", pp.4-5

<sup>32</sup> Irina Isakova, "The Russian Defense Reforms" pp. 81-82

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Osipovich; Medvedev's military reforms Irks Russian Hawks

<sup>34</sup> RIANOVOSTI 09/02/2009

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> RIANOVOSTI 20/03/2009

<sup>37</sup> Rossiiskaia Gazeta; Oct 15,2008

<sup>38</sup> Medvedev's interview. March 17, 2009

<sup>39</sup> Voice of America. March 20, 2009

<sup>40</sup> DefenseNews, Russia Buys Israeli UAVs To Study Capability.

<sup>41</sup> Hipman, Dr. John. "The Military Balance 2009" The International Institute for Strategic Studies: Rutledge. January 2009. P-214

<sup>42</sup> RIANOVOSTI 21/12/2009

<sup>43</sup> RIANOVOSTI.31/03/2009

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Dale R. Herspring. Putin's Russia P-186

<sup>46</sup> Ibid p-186

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/inflation\\_rate](http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/inflation_rate). (Consumer prices).

<sup>48</sup> <http://voennovost.ru/news.175.htm>

<sup>49</sup> Corruption Cripples Military Reforms. <http://www.strategypage.com/qnd/russia/20080704.aspx>

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<sup>51</sup> Helen Womack. Russian Army Sell-off to Pay for Housing. The Guardian March 12,2008

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid